

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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R 081945Z JUN 78
FM AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6323
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 RIO DE JANEIRO 2603

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, BR
SUBJECT: RIO DE JANEIRO MDB NAMES CHAGAS FREITAS AS NEXT STATE
GOVERNOR

1. SUMMARY: THE POLITICAL DRAMA OF THE ARENA CONVENTION
IN SAO PAULO ON JUNE 4 WAS LACKING IN THE MDB STATE PARTY
CONVENTION OF THE SAME DAY THAT MET TO CHOOSE ITS
CANDIDATE IN RIO, THE ONLY STATE IN BRAZIL WHERE THE
POLITICAL RULES PERMIT AND EVEN ASSURE VICTORY FOR MDB
CANDIDATES IN THE INDIRECT GUBERNATORIAL AND SENATORIAL
ELECTIONS PRESCRIBED IN PRESIDENT GEISEL'S APRIL 1977
"PACKAGE" OF POLITICAL REFORMS. TO NO ONE'S SURPRISE
THE MDB REGIONAL (STATE) CONVENTION VOTED OVER-
WHELMINGLY, BY VOTE OF 814 DELEGATES OUT OF A POSSIBLE
909, TO SEND THE FORMER GOVERNOR OF GUANABARA AND
ACKNOWLEDGED POLITICAL BOSS OF RIO DE JANEIRO STATE
BACK TO THE GOVERNOR'S PALACE. THE DECISION REPRESENTED A
PREDICTABLE DEFEAT FOR THE ANTI-CHAGAISTAS
AND MDB "AUTENTICOS" FOR WHOM CHAGAS AND HIS MACHINE
REPRESENT BETRAYAL OF PARTY PRINCIPLES AND SELL-OUT
TO THE "SYSTEM". THE SELECTION WAS PART OF A DEAL
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WHEREBY, IN EXCHANGE FOR A MDB NATIONAL PARTY GREEN
LIGHT TO CHAGAS, THE CHAGUISTAS VAGUELY AGREED TO SUPPORT
A POSSIBLE MDB PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE AGAINST FIGUEIREDO,
TO ENDORSE A STATEMENT OF MDB PRINCIPLES, AND TO FOREGO
THE "BIONIC" SENATORIAL SEAT THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN
AVAILABLE TO THE PARTY IN RIO UNDER THE INDIRECT
ELECTION SYSTEM. FOR FIGUEIREDO, ASSUMING HE WILL

BE THE NEXT PRESIDENT, IT WAS A HAPPY DECISION THAT ASSURES HIM OF A COOPERATIVE ADMINISTRATION IN THIS SECOND MOST IMPORTANT STATE, AN ADMINISTRATION THAT WILL GOVERN WITH MORE POLITICAL SENSITIVITY AND FINESSE, THOUGH PERHAPS WITH LESS EFFICIENCY, THAN THE PRESENT TECHNOCRAT GOVERNMENT OF ADMIRAL FARIA LIMA AND WILL CONTINUE CONSOLIDATION OF THE FEDERALLY-DECREED PROJECT OF MERGER BETWEEN THE FORMER STATES OF GUANABARA AND RIO DE JANEIRO. IT WILL ALSO CARRY OUT ORDERS OF FIGUEIREDO AND THE MILITARY. END SUMMARY.

2. ENDORSEMENT OF CHAGAS FREITAS WAS EASILY PREDICTABLE AT LEAST SINCE JUNE OF 1977, WHEN CHAGAS FREITAS AND SENATOR AMARAL PEIXOTO REACHED A PEACH ACCORD ON BEHALF OF THEIR RIVAL MACHINES CONTROLLING THE POLITICAL LIFE OF, RESPECTIVELY, EX-GUANABARA AND THE OLD STATE OF RIO DE JANEIRO. THE STATE CONVENTION ACTION HAD, HOWEVER, BEEN PRECEDED BY A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF MINOR THEATRICALS RELATING BOTH TO THE POWER STRUGGLE WITHIN THE STATE AND TO MDB NATIONAL ASPIRATIONS. ON THE STATE SCENE THERE HAD BEEN SKEPTICISM AS TO THE VIABILITY OF THE CHAGAS FREITAS/AMARAL PEIXOTO ACCORD WHICH WOULD HAVE DIVIDED THE POLITICAL SPOILS OF THE STATE BETWEEN THE TWO MACHINES, BUT WITH CHAGAS FREITAS CONCEDED THE GOVERNORSHIP. IT WAS NOT CERTAIN THAT THE AMARALISTAS WOULD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ACCEPT A SECONDARY ROLE, PARTICULARLY SINCE THEY WOULD HAVE ENCOURAGEMENT FROM ELEMENTS IN THE NATIONAL PARTY FOR WHICH SENATOR AMARAL PEIXOTO WAS FAR MORE REPRESENTATIVE OF MDB IDEOLOGY THAN CHAGAS. DESPITE CONTINUED BICKERING, HOWEVER, THE ACCORD WAS KEPT, THANKS LARGELY TO THE GOOD FAITH AND REALISTIC POWER CALCULATIONS OF AMARAL PEIXOTO WHOSE PERSONAL POLITICAL AMBITIONS APPEAR TO BE WANING IN HIS ADVANCING AGE AND WHOSE FOLLOWERS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN SATISFIED WITH HIS SHARE OF THE SPOILS, INCLUDING THE SELECTION OF AN AMARALISTA TO BE VICE-GOVERNOR AND A VAGUE PROMISE OF ANOTHER SENATORIAL TERM FOR HIMSELF.

3. ALTHOUGH CHAGAS' VICTORY WAS VIRTUALLY FOREORDAINED, LARGER CONCERNS OF THE MDB NATIONAL PARTY DID POSE SOME PROBLEMS FOR THE ARCHITECTS OF HIS RIO STATE ELECTION STRATEGY. FIRST THERE WAS THE QUESTION OF PARTY PRINCIPLE. CHAGAS WAS A RENEGADE WHO HAD RESIGNED FROM THE PARTY IN 1975 TO AVOID A PARTY DECISION TO EXPEL HIM FOR, AMONG OTHER THINGS, FAILING TO SUPPORT THE NATIONAL TICKET IN 1975. MORE IMMEDIATELY, PRESIDENT GEISEL'S APRIL PACKAGE

OF REFORMS HAD BEEN ROUNDLY CONDEMNED BY THE MDB
NATIONALLY AND, IN PARTICULAR, THE MDB HAD DECLARED
ITSELF BITTERLY AGAINST INDIRECT ELECTIONS FOR
GOVERNOR AND FOR THE "BIONIC" SENATORS. WITH THE
MDB CAMPAIGNING VEHEMENTLY AGAINST THIS SYSTEM IN
EVERY OTHER STATE, IT SEEMED TO MANY IN THE PARTY A
GROSS INCONSISTENCY FOR THE MDB TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF
IT IN THE ONLY STATE WHERE THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE
COULD YIELD A MDB VICTORY. ANOTHER PROBLEM FOR THE
NATIONAL MDB WAS ITS INDECISIVE REACTION TO DEVELOP-
MENTS RELATED TO THIS YEAR'S PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAING.
THE POSSIBLE AVAILABILITY TO THE MDB OF AN ANTI-
FIGUEIRADO MILITARY CANDIDATE IN THE FORM OF RETIRED
GENERAL EULER BENTES MONTEIRO WAS A TEMPTATION TO
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IMPORTANT ELEMENTS IN THE PARTY, WHO FAVORED IT AS
A POSSIBLE MEANS OF MOUNTING THE ONLY CONCEIVABLY

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FM AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
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INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 RIO DE JANEIRO 2603

EFFECTIVE CHALLENGE TO FIGUEIREDO; OTHERS, LED BY
PARTY PRESIDENT ULYSSES GUIMARAES, WERE RELUCTANT
TO OPT FOR THE GENERAL, SEEING IT AS A TACTIC THAT
MIGHT PROVE TO BE AN UNNECESSARILY DANGEROUS AND
PROVOCATIVE GAMBLE THAT WOULD ENDANGER MORE REALISTIC

AND PRINCIPLED MDB PARTY OBJECTIVES. THE DIVISION ON THIS ISSUE IN THE NATIONAL PARTY WAS DRAWN GENERALLY ALONG THE CLEAVAGE LINE BETWEEN THE "AUTENTICOS" AND MODERATES OF THE PARTY. THE FORMER FAVOR ENDORSEMENT OF EULER ALONG WITH THE "NATIONAL FRONT FOR REDEMOCRATIZATION" THAT HE AND MAGALHAES PINTO ARE PUSHING, WHILE THE MODERATES ARE ON THE SIDE OF CAUTION. THUS, IT HAPPENED THAT THE AUTENTICOS FOUND THEMSELVES FAVORING A CONTESTATION IN THE INDIRECT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WHILE OPPOSING THE RIO MDB'S PARTICIPATION IN INDIRECT STATE ELECTIONS AND, OF COURSE, ALSO OPPOSING CHAGAS FREITAS AS AN INDIVIDUAL. IN THE CLASH BETWEEN THESE POINTS OF VIEW, NEITHER SIDE WAS FATED TO LOSE COMPLETELY AND THE WAY WAS OPEN FOR A DEAL.

4. THE GAME FORMALLY OPENED IN LATE MAY WHEN THE RIO MDB LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DIRECTORATE ENDORSED THE STATE PARTY'S PARTICIPATION IN INDIRECT ELECTIONS FOR BOTH GOVERNOR AND BIONIC SENATOR, WITH A SPECIFIC ENDORSEMENT OF CHAGAS FREITAS. THE FINAL DECISION WAS THEN UP TO THE NATIONAL CONVENTION WHICH MET ON MAY 31 WHERE, AFTER HEATED DEBATE, THE DEAL WAS HAMMERED OUT. IN ESSENCE, THE NATIONAL MDB AGREED TO PERMIT PARTICIPATION BY STATE PARTIES IN INDIRECT ELECTIONS FOR GOVERNOR AND VICE-GOVERNOR (AND OF COURSE RIO WAS THE ONLY RELEVANT STATE), BUT BARRED PARTICIPATION IN THE INDIRECT SENATORIAL ELECTION PROCESS. SO MUCH FOR THE CHAGUISTAS. FOR THE AUTENTICOS THE DEAL COMMITTED THE PARTY AS A WHOLE TO "ACCEPT THE POSSIBILITY" OF RUNNING A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE AGAINST FIGUEIREDO AND, BY IMPLICATION, SUPPORTING THE NATIONAL REDEMOCRATIZATION FRONT. THE CHAGUISTAS ALSO HAD TO ENDORSE, IN THE FINAL CONVENTION DOCUMENT, A TEN POINT STATEMENT OF PARTY PRINCIPLES.

5. AFTER THE CONVENTION DECISION, IT WAS A MERELY ROUTINE ACTION FOR THE RIO REGIONAL PARTY CONVENTION TO RUBBERSTAMP THE SELECTION OF CHAGAS FREITAS AS WELL AS OF HIS CHOSEN RUNNING MATE, WALTON XAVIER, A FAIRLY OBSCURE AMARALISTA. THIS IS, OF COURSE, TANTAMOUNT TO THEIR ELECTION IN THE INDIRECT BALLOTING BY THE STATE ELECTORAL COLLEGE SEPTEMBER 1.

6. THE MDB DECISION TO ACCEPT CHAGAS FREITAS AND TO PERMIT THE RIO PARTY TO RUN IN THE INDIRECT GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS WAS GREETED WITH APPROPRIATE CYNICISM AND CRITICISM BY MUCH OF THE PRESS,

INCLUDING BOTH ESTADA DE SAO PAULO AND RIO'S JORNAL
DO BRASIL, AND CLEARLY REPRESENTED A TRIUMPH OF LOCAL
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EXPEDIENCY OVER NATIONAL PRINCIPLE. EVEN THE COMPROMISE
FORMULA AGREED UPON BY THE MDB CONVENTION PROVIDES SMALL
CONSOLATION TO THE CRITICS INASMUCH AS THERE CAN BE
LITTLE FAITH IN THE SINCERITY OF CHAGAS FREITAS AND
HIS SUPPORTERS IN PROCLAIMING ALLEGIANCE TO MDB
NATIONAL DOCTRINE AND OFFERING, BY IMPLICATION, THEIR
SUPPORT FOR A POSSIBLE CANDIDACY ON THE MDB TICKET OF
GENERAL EULER BENTES MONEIRO OR ANY OTHER SERIOUS
ANTI-FIGUEIREDO CANDIDATE. THE RECORD OF CHAGAS FREITAS
PROVIDES SCANT GROUNDS FOR BELIEVING THAT HE WOULD
BREAK HIS LONG-STANDING TIES OF COOPERATION WITH, IF
NOT SUBSERVIENCE TO, THE MILITARY "SYSTEM" OR THAT HE
WOULD RISK AFFRONTING THE PROBABLE NEXT PRESIDENT
WHEN HIS OWN STATE ADMINISTRATION WILL BE SO MUCH
DEPENDENT UPON THE FINANCIAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND
POLITICAL SUPPORT OF THE PLANALTO. THE DEAL, IN
SHORT, SIMPLY PAPERS OVER THE PROFOUND FISSURES IN
THE MDB PARTY WHICH WERE AMPLY EXPOSED TO PUBLIC VIEW
DURING THE DEBATE OVER THE CANDIDACY OF CHAGAS
FREITAS.
DEXTER

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